

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 205

EC 305 922

AUTHOR Kohanek, Jean, Ed.; Divita, Therese, Ed.  
TITLE Contextual Learning [and] Vocational Assessment.  
INSTITUTION Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC.  
SPONS AGENCY Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (ED), Washington, DC.; Department of Labor, Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE 1997-00-00  
NOTE 27p.; The National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities no longer exists. Theme issues. Published quarterly.  
CONTRACT H158M50001  
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022)  
JOURNAL CIT Alliance: Newsletter of the National Transition Alliance; v2 n1-2 Mar, Sep 1997  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; Career Education; \*Disabilities; \*Education Work Relationship; Educational Assessment; Educational Legislation; Educational Practices; Federal Legislation; Secondary Education; \*Transitional Programs; Vocational Evaluation; Vocational Rehabilitation; World Wide Web  
IDENTIFIERS Individuals with Disabilities Educ Act Amend 1997; School to Work Opportunities Act 1994

## ABSTRACT

These two newsletter issues of the National Transition Alliance (NTA) for Youth with Disabilities present articles concerning the transition of youth with disabilities from school-to-work (STW) and related informational items. The first issue contains the following articles: "Contextual Learning" (analysis of one of the five categories of practices focused on by the NTA) and "Career Pathways" by Marianne Mooney (discussion of the "career pathways" element of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.) Also provided are descriptions of three selected Web sites and a calendar of related conferences. The second issue focuses on vocational assessment. Articles include: "Vocational Assessment: The Kick-Off Point for Successful Transitions" (Pamela J. Leconte and Debra A. Neubert); "Professionals in Vocational Assessment" (a description of the roles of various professionals); "Legislative Update: Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)" - modifications of the requirements for providing transition services; and "When All Means All: How To Include Youth with Disabilities in Accountability Systems". Also included are snapshots from the annual Project Directors Meeting, a list of related organizations, descriptions of two Web resources, and a list of selected conferences. (DB)

# **Contextual Learning [and] Vocational Assessment**

**Editors:  
Therese Divita  
Jean Kohanek**

**Alliance: Newsletter of the National Transition Alliance  
v2 n1-2 Mar, Sep 1997**

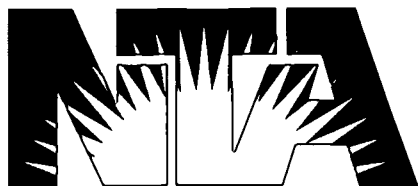
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NATIONAL TRANSITION ALLIANCE  
FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

# ALLIANCE

*The Newsletter of the National Transition Alliance*

*A Quarterly Newsletter Volume 2 Number 1 March 1997*

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Our New  
Web Site

[www.dssc.org/nta](http://www.dssc.org/nta)

### Alliance

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## Contextual Learning

As in previous issues of the Alliance, we continue to focus attention on the National Transition Alliance framework. Its primary purpose is to identify effective school to work practices that address the needs of all students, particularly youth with disabilities in transition from school to adult life. The framework features five broad categories of practices including: **Structures and Policies, Student-Focused Planning and Development, Career Pathways and Contextual Learning, Family Involvement, and Business and Community Resources.** This article presents a brief examination of the concept of contextual learning and a summary of best practices from the state of Iowa.

Today, schools across the nation are adopting the principles of contextual learning, often referred to as applied learning, real life education, active learning, and student-centered instruction. Although contextual learning is becoming increasingly popular, it is not easily defined by a common set of practices or strategies. Instead, it is often overlooked because of its common-sense application. Contextual learning implies the development of instruction that is situation and content-specific and provides opportunities for authentic problem-solving and task practice. For example, students are presented with options to experience real-life learning in different industry

environments. Research supports the idea that abstract or theoretical concept learning is easier when it is applied directly through hands-on experiences.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 both emphasize contextual learning experiences. For example, the integration of vocational and academic instruction, the provision of well-planned work-based learning experiences for youth, and the "all aspects of the industry" highlighted in these laws require students to interact directly with real experiences.

Contextual learning approaches break down traditional classroom walls and extend teaching and learning to all corners of the community. Instructional applications may range from individual academic teacher efforts to incorporate vocational themes into classroom content, to reorganizing an entire school curriculum around a specific occupational cluster or career major. However comprehensive the approach, contextual learning is reshaping the way teachers teach and young people learn. Educators are challenged to think in nontraditional ways and to collaborate with employers, families, and community members in developing relevant curricula. Employers

CONTEXTUAL Continued on page 3



# MEMBERS

## National Transition Alliance Mission

The mission of the National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities is to ensure that youth with disabilities, including those with severe disabilities, acquire skills and knowledge, gain experience, and receive services and supports necessary to achieve successful post school outcomes, including postsecondary education, gainful employment, independent living, community living, social integration, and lifelong learning. The National Transition Alliance seeks the formation of one education system that benefits from the lessons learned from special education, regular education, and vocational education.

Welcome to our fourth issue of the *Alliance* newsletter, published by the Academy for Educational Development. We encourage you to copy and share this newsletter. When you do, we ask that you recognize the National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities (NTA) in your publication. We rely on your suggestions and feedback to shape the direction of the *Alliance*. Thank you for taking the time to complete and return the enclosed questionnaire.

We encourage you to visit the NTA web site for further information on our partnering organizations, national resources, a calendar of events and much more! Articles from earlier *Alliance* issues are also found on our web site: just click on **Publications** from our **Products** page!



### Our New NTA Web Site Address:

[www.dssc.org/nta](http://www.dssc.org/nta)

**Transition Research Institute**  
University of Illinois  
(217) 333-2325 voice or tdd  
(217) 244-0851 fax

[www.ed.uiuc.edu/coe/sped/tri/institute.html](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/coe/sped/tri/institute.html)

**National Transition Network**  
Institute on Community Integration  
University of Minnesota  
(612) 626-7220 voice  
(612) 624-9344 fax

[www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ntn](http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ntn)

**The Academy for Educational Development**  
Washington, DC  
(202) 884-8183 voice  
(202) 884-8443 fax

[www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org)

**The Council of Chief State School Officers**  
Washington, DC  
(202) 408-5505 voice  
(202) 408-8072 fax

[www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)

**National Association of State Directors of Special Education**  
Alexandria, VA  
(703) 519-3800 voice  
(703) 519-3808 fax

**National Alliance of Business**  
Washington, DC  
(202) 289-2972 voice  
(202) 289-1303 fax

[www.nab.com](http://www.nab.com)

are encouraged to contribute to the curricula by providing schools with realistic, up-to-date, career-related knowledge and skills. All stakeholders must develop a shared vision of contextual learning experiences by rethinking curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As a result, students are offered unique opportunities to engage in real-life learning. In addition, students can begin to appreciate the connection between classroom learning and performance in other environments. Contextual learning can be applied throughout life in many social and physical settings.

Iowa, one of the original School to Work Implementation sites, relies on local implementation of the state's strategic plan to prepare all students to enter and succeed in a changing workplace. Iowa received \$3.75 million in 1995 under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. Its K-12 education system serves nearly three million students, in 390 school districts. Fifteen community colleges and 15 area education agencies also serve the state's student population. Examples of effective strategies of contextual learning may be found among many programs in Iowa schools. The NTA includes a few illustrations of such efforts found in two school districts and one educational agency in the state. These examples describe how Iowa schools effectively use school to work practices to give all youth opportunities to experience learning within real-life contexts.

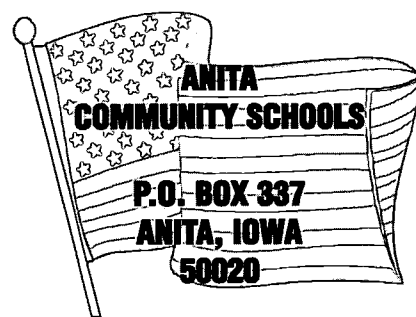
Located in southwestern Iowa, Anita Community School district is a rural school system serving more than three hundred students in elementary, middle, and high schools. Individuals from this district firmly believe in "providing all youth, including those with disabilities, with the skills necessary to be productive contributing members of the community." In the Anita Community School district, youth with disabilities identify their occupational interest area as early as their freshman year by including a statement in their individual transition plan.

A variety of opportunities to gain employability skills are offered to youth with disabilities through a unique program called Career Ladders. Career Ladders focuses on pairing youth with disabilities

with nondisabled peers. In many cases, students without disabilities learn to become peer mentors for students of the same age with disabilities. The School to Work Coordinator reports that students with and without disabilities are learning job tasks and routines that match their own interests, together in work settings. Mentors act as peer buddies to assist students with disabilities on the job and in the classroom. For example, for a student who has difficulty following oral directions, a mentor may shadow the youth as she or he performs tasks at the job site. Unlike job coaches, mentors help their fellow students understand procedures or directions of a task, when necessary. It is important to note that these mentoring students have not been through the school to work process before and do not have the training skills required to perform as a job coach. Their assistance in the form of modeling, or becoming peer buddies, helps youth with disabilities to adapt more readily to the work setting. To date, Anita schools have not yet worked with youth with significant disabilities, but do have plans to begin this as their School to Work design evolves.

As these students follow their career paths, they move through the orientation and training processes together. Mentors help as needed with employability skill training in both settings. Career Ladders provides various opportunities and needed support for young people with disabilities to gain hands-on experiences and learn across settings.

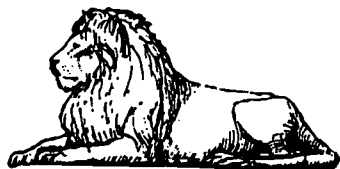
Local businesses are actively involved in school-based activities. For example, employers participate in classroom training activities, and community organizations provide students with hands-on experiences through extended periods of paid work and unpaid internships. These activities not only strengthen school-community partnerships, but have led to 97% success rate of youth with disabilities maintaining their jobs or entering college training. The Anita Community School District attributes their success, in part, to contextual learning strate-



Donna Swim  
STW Coordinator  
Anita Community School District  
Victory Park Road  
P.O. Box 337 • Anita, IA 50020  
(712) 762-3238  
(712) 762-3713 (fax)  
Career Ladders provides various opportunities and the support for young people with disabilities to gain hands-on experiences and learn across settings.



gies that tie interest to work experiences early on in education.



**Shirley Pantini**  
 Director of Curriculum  
 Linn-Mar Community Schools  
 3333 North 10th Street  
 Marion, IA 52302  
 (319) 377-7373 (ext) 1290  
 (319) 377-9252 (fax)  
 One school business teacher has teamed with a language art teacher to develop a course called "Careers: Pathways to Success." This course integrates students into cooperative learning groups to explore career options and addresses the question of how to help students prepare for effective career planning.

Linn-Mar Community School District, a suburban district, is in the early stages of its school to work action plan development. Linn-Mar plans to include all students, so that special educators can be involved in the ground-floor planning process. This ensures participation of students with disabilities. Linn-Mar has adopted a School-to-Career vision that states: "The School-to-Career Design Team envisions designing a system where all graduates will use their knowledge and skills in careers of their choice, no matter when they enter the world of work."

Within the Schools-to-Career action plans, changes to instructional delivery include innovative teaching strategies. One planned outcome in the Linn-Mar district is the development of a collaborative curriculum that integrates academic and vocational learning. In fact, business and social studies instructors have already integrated portions of their marketing and economics courses. One business teacher, for example, has teamed with a language art teacher to develop a course called "Careers: Pathways to Success." This course integrates students into cooperative learning groups to explore career options and addresses the question of how to help students prepare for effective career planning.

Another outcome of the planning sessions was the development of an employer survey by the Design Team subcommittees. The survey, which was processed through the local Chamber of Commerce, asked employers to identify categories of necessary entry-level job skills and prioritize them. Employers were also asked to identify ways they would be willing to assist with the School-to-Career initiative. Linkages between schools and businesses

create carefully structured, sequenced and situation-specific learning experiences for all youth.

The Linn-Mar District is committed to the inclusion of work-readiness skills in the curriculum. Therefore, Linn-Mar's teachers are given opportunities to visit businesses and industries to develop a better understanding of the employability skills needed by students. In turn, teachers understand what teaching skills and workplace knowledge they must develop to better prepare youth for the workplace. These workplace visits give teachers the first-hand knowledge they need to accurately link classroom instruction with community experiences and employer expectations, a critical component of successful transitions from school to work.

The Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) reflects a systemic viewpoint of contextual learning. GWAEA is an intermediate agency that provides leadership and service to support learning in 32 Iowa school districts and their communities. It assists districts in developing school improvement plans and unified education systems that serve all students. GWAEA staff supports a transition model that emphasizes planning practices from early childhood through postschool education and services. Students with disabilities, who are in Early Childhood Programs through grade 12, develop their school-based, work-based and connecting activities within an outcome-based Individualized Education Plan. For example, if a student wants to work in the health sciences industry, specific course work, experiences, and skill competencies are the factors that drive the design of his or her program. The program occurs either during the student's school years or during both schooling and postschool years.

Several supports found in the Grant Wood Area Education Agency include the Transition Advisory Committee, two Transition Consultants and a group of STW Coordinators assigned to school districts. The Transition Advisory Committee, with representatives from more than 40 agencies in a seven-county area, builds community partnerships to develop meaningful school-based, work-based, and connecting activities. Schools, families, post-secondary institutions, and community agencies collaborate to create strong, accessible services and



#### Grant Wood

**Lucy Choisser,**  
 Transition Consultant  
 Grant Wood AEA  
 200 Holiday Road  
 Coralville, IA 52241  
 (319) 358-6237  
 (319) 358-6201 (fax)

# Career Pathways

by Marianne Mooney

Career pathways, commonly referred to as career clusters, occupational themes, and career majors, are structured and meaningful sequences of academically and vocationally related courses tied to occupational areas. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (STWOA) calls for all students to select a career path no later than the 11th grade. Likewise, according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA), students with disabilities are required to develop transition plans no later than age sixteen. However, both laws support the planning and selection process to begin much earlier in a student's school career. For instance, IDEA is considering changing the requirements of the law, so that students have a statement of transition by the age of fourteen. Before selecting a pathway, students are exposed to a wide variety of occupations in introductory career exploration courses. Each pathway offers occupation-related course work and training in transferable work-related skills. Career pathways provide an efficient way for students to move from skill acquisition to skill application, from observation to "hands-on" activities, and from school-based learning to successful workplace performance.

Career pathways can encompass a variety of occupations so that all students can fully participate. Occupations included in career pathways range from requiring highly skilled to moderately skilled background and include broad areas such as business and finance, health and human services, agriculture and natural resources, and communication technology, to name a few. Career pathways are often determined by local economic needs, teacher expertise, and labor market trends. Students can join the work force immediately after completing high school, or they can continue their career pathway as part of their postsecondary education.

Several school systems, in fact, have organized pathways that lead into local postsecondary programs and/or link with technical preparation pro-

. Career paths that are linked to business,

industry, labor, government, and the community lead to further education and employment.

The use of career pathways moves away from training students only for specific occupations. Instead, a broader-based approach is taken in which students not only learn skills for a specific occupational area, but they also acquire concepts and skills that can be transferred to any occupation. For example, a student with a disability may need additional training in interpersonal communication. Rather than narrowly focusing instruction on job-specific procedures and processes, the career pathway approach provides much-needed application and relevance. This approach prepares students for a labor market in which change and mobility are standard. In addition, career pathways provide many opportunities for contextualized instruction in school and at the workplace.

Classroom learning is frequently detached from a meaningful context, leaving students the task of connecting what they learn in school to what they know about real world experiences. Most students find this process frustrating, often failing to understand the relevance of classroom instruction. Students need to be given the opportunity to test their understanding in practical situations. School and work based learning activities, as highlighted in the STWOA, can provide many opportunities for students to learn academic material in the context of work. The

STWOA

encourages use of contextualized instruction strategies to make education more meaningful for

## Resources for Contextual Learning

National School to Work Opportunities: Resource Bulletin, April 1996. [Available online: [www.stw.ed.gov](http://www.stw.ed.gov) or call National School-to-Work Office, 400 Virginia Avenue, SW Room 210, Washington, D.C. 20024, (800) 251-7236.]

Kohler, P. (1996). School-to-Work Framework. In *Taxonomy for Transition Planning: Linking Research and Practice* [Available online: [www.ed.uiuc.edu/coe/sped/tri/taximage](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/coe/sped/tri/taximage) or call Transition Research Institute, 113 Children's Research Center, 51 Gerty Drive, Champaign, Illinois 61820, (217) 333-2325.]

Siegal, S., Robert, M., Greener, K., Meyer, G., Halloran, W., and Gaylord-Ross, R. (1996). *Career Ladders for Challenged Youths in Transition from School to Adult Life*. Austin, Texas: Pro-Ed. [Available: Pro-Ed, 8700 Shoal Creek Boulevard, Austin, Texas 76010, (800) 224-6930.]

Townsend, S. Transition and your adolescent with learning disabilities: Moving from high school to postsecondary education, training and employment. Kansas Transition Systems Change Project, Shawnee Mission, Kansas. [Available: Transition Planning, Resource Directory Shawnee Mission School District-Pace Program, Broadmoor Center, 6701 West 83 Street, Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66204, (913) 642-3130.]

Weinbaum, A., & Rogers, A. (1995). *Contextual Learning: A Critical Aspect of School-To-Work Transition Programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute for Work and Learning. [Available: Academy for Educational Development, 1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20009-1202, (202) 884-8186.]

**Examples of Select Project about Contextual Learning and Career Pathways can be found in sidebars on pages 6 and 7 of this issue.**

CAREER PATHS Continued on page 8

# Newly Funded Projects from the Na Office of Special Education and

## Contextual Learning Project

James E. Martin, Ph.D.  
School of Education,  
Self-Determination Project  
University of Colorado at  
Colorado Springs  
1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway  
P.O. Box 7150  
Colorado Springs,  
CO 80933-7150  
(719) 593-3627;  
fax: (719) 593-3554  
jemarin@uccs.edu

The ChoiceMaker Network is creating and implementing a train-the-trainer model of curriculum development for multiple states. This project will provide innovative materials and practices during and after the 3-year funding period. Expected goals include establishing implementation teams in Colorado, West Virginia, Florida, South Dakota, and Iowa, implementing self-determination transition practices and completing the ChoiceMaker self-determination transition curriculum and materials.

In November 1996, The U.S. Department of Education and Labor awarded \$58 million in School to Work grants to ten new states. Grants of this nature support efforts to help prepare students for the postsecondary education and training needed for successful careers and high-paying jobs. The NTA welcomes these newly funded grantees! Including these new grantees, a total of 37 states have now received School to Work implementation funds.

For more information about these states or existing School to Work States visit the School to Work Home page on World Wide Web: [www.stw.ed.gov](http://www.stw.ed.gov)

## Newly Funded School to Work States

California Employment Development  
Department  
Contact: Kathy Sage  
(916) 653-0270

Connecticut State Department  
of Education  
Contact: Leslie M. Aversa  
(860) 638-4000

Louisiana Office of the Governor  
Contact: Chris Weaver  
(504) 342-2094

Minnesota Department of Children,  
Families and Learning  
Contact: Eugene Piccolo  
(612) 296-3348

Missouri Department of Elementary  
and Secondary Education  
Contact: Russell McCampbell  
(573) 751-2660

Nevada Department of Education  
Contact: Keith W. Rheault  
(702) 687-9158

New Mexico Department of Finance  
Administration  
Contact: Vonell Huit  
(505) 827-3078

Rhode Island Department  
of Education  
Contact: Judith Marmaras  
(401) 277-4600

Tennessee Department  
of Education  
Contact: Jane Walters  
(615) 741-2731

Texas Workforce Commission  
Contact: Dee Bodnar  
(512) 463-9484

## Project funded in October 1996 by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)

Eight new Model Demonstration Projects which seek to improve the delivery and outcomes of secondary education services for students with disabilities.

James Wiedle  
University of Alaska-Anchorage  
2330 Nichols Rd.  
Anchorage, AK 99508  
(907) 272-8270

Dr. Addison Watanabe  
Department of Special Education  
San Francisco State University  
1600 Holloway St.  
San Francisco, CA 94132  
(415) 338-1248

Dr. Donald Deshler  
KU-CRL  
3061 Dole Center  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
(913) 864-4780

Dr. Thomas Simmons  
Department of Special Education  
University of Louisville, Room 158  
Louisville, KY 40292-0001  
(502) 852-0569

Dr. Jo Ann Sowers  
Institute on Disability  
University of New Hampshire  
10 Ferry Street, Unit 14  
Concord, NH 03301  
(603) 228-2084

Dr. Susan Nochajski  
State University of New York-Buffalo  
Department of Occupational Therapy  
515 Kimball Tower  
Buffalo, NY 14214  
(716) 829-3141

Dr. Andrew Halpern  
University of Oregon  
175 College of Education  
Eugene, OR 97403  
(541) 346-1409

Dr. Susan Hasazi  
College of Education and Social Services  
University of Vermont  
Waterman Building, Room 448  
Burlington, VT 05405  
(802) 656-4031



# ional School to Work Office and the Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)

**Twelve new projects in Postsecondary Demonstration. These projects focus in special adaptations of postsecondary services/career placement for individuals with disabilities.**

Dr. Nancy McDaniel  
Center for Special Services  
7300 University Drive  
Montgomery, AL 36117  
(205) 244-3468

Dr. Ian Pumpian  
San Diego State University  
Interwork Institute  
5850 Hardy Avenue, #112  
San Diego, CA 92182  
(619) 594-7179

Dr. Jean Lehmann  
Colorado State University  
School of Education  
Room 101, Education Building  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1588  
(970) 491-5169

Mary Moriarty  
Springfield Technical  
Community College  
One Amory Square  
Springfield, MA 01105  
(413) 781-7822

Janice Marks  
Howard Community College  
Student Academic Support Services  
10901 Little Patuxent Parkway  
Columbia, MD 21044  
(410) 992-4800

Dr. Elizabeth Schaughency  
Grand Valley State University  
Department of Psychology  
Allendale, MI 49401  
(616) 895-2438

Dr. Jane Siders  
University of Southern Mississippi  
Southern Station  
Box 5163  
Hattiesburg, MS 39402  
(601) 266-5114

Dr. Jan Nisbet  
7 Leavitt Lane Suite 101  
Durham, NH 03824  
(603) 862-0555

Desiree Duda  
Program for Deaf Adults  
LaGuardia Community College  
29-10 Thomson Avenue, Room C-204  
Long Island City, NY 11101  
(718) 482-5318

Dr. Michael McCue  
Center for Applied Neuropsychology  
100 First Avenue, Suite 900  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
(412) 391-4590

Tanya Sorenson  
Columbia Basin College  
2600 North 20th  
Pasco, WA 99301

Dr. Sheryl Burgstahler  
University of Washington  
4545 15th Avenue, NE, Room 109  
Seattle, WA 98105  
(206) 685-4054

**Eight new Multi-District Outreach projects support the capacity of local education agencies by promoting the implementation of proven transition models through a range of activities.**

Dr. Tamar Heller  
Institute on Disability and Human  
Development  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
1640 West Roosevelt Road (M/C 626)  
Chicago, IL 60608  
(312) 413-1537

Dr. Sandra Thompson  
Minnesota Department of  
Children, Families, and Learning  
Capital Square Building  
550 Cedar Street, Room 656  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
(612) 296-2965

Richard Zachmeyer  
Catskill Center for Independence  
P.O. Box 1247  
Oneonta, NY 13820  
(607) 432-8000

Dr. Bob Baer  
Center for Innovation and Transition  
308 White Hall  
Kent State University  
Kent, OH 44242-0001  
(330) 672-3833

Dr. Laurie Powers  
CDRC-OHSU  
P.O. Box 574  
Portland, OR 97207  
(504) 494-7930

Dr. Andrew Halpern  
University of Oregon  
175 College of Education  
Eugene, OR 97403  
(541) 346-1409

Dr. Carolyn Hughes  
Department of Special Education  
Peabody College, Box 328  
Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, TN 37203  
(615) 322-8186

Dr. Michael Wehmeyer  
The Arc National Headquarters  
500 East Border Street, Suite 300  
Arlington, TX 76010  
(817) 261-6003

## Contextual Learning Project

Dr. Nellie P. Aspel, Principal  
Gail Bettis, Transition Teacher  
Project TASSEL  
Shelby City Schools  
315 Patton Drive  
Shelby, NC 28150  
(704) 487-9941;  
fax: (704) 487-2867

The aim of Project TASSEL is to provide quality and comprehensive transition services to students with disabilities and assist them in a smooth transition from school to the community. The success of this transition will be related to measurable objectives in each school. Project TASSEL provides training in academics, vocational skills, and life skills. All students with disabilities at the secondary level are involved with some aspect of Project TASSEL. Schools work closely with area adult agencies to provide appropriate services, thus ensuring the successful transition of graduates into the community.

**"School to Work means learning for the future," said U.S. Secretary Richard W. Riley. "It expands education opportunities and career options for students by connecting academic achievement and on-the-job success and makes lifelong learning a lifetime habit."**

## Contextual Learning Project

Andrew Halpern • Bonnie Doren  
175 College of Education  
University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403  
(541) 346-1413;  
fax (541) 346-1411  
andrewhalpern@ccmail.uoregon.edu

NEXT STEP Curriculum, developed over the past several years at the University of Oregon, has been extensively field tested and found to be very effective. The purpose of the project is to conceptualize and implement a strategy that addresses existing barriers and identify motivating factors that promote Self Directed Transition Planning. New York, Utah and Arizona will be involved in the implementation.

all students by integrating academic and occupational learning and providing authentic settings in the community to apply this learning.

Studies have shown that student outcomes improve when school-based programs are organized around career concepts. Career pathways provide a naturally supportive structure for the integration of academic and occupational content in the context of their applications. Contextualized classroom instruction develops broad, transferable skills that apply to all occupations such as work-readiness skills and problem-solving abilities, while continuing to develop the skills needed for an identified occupational area. Contextual learning in the classroom allows students to see the relationships between subject matter and teacher expectations, and become familiar with workplace training and employer expectations. School-based activities can provide students with career orientation experiences that may help them to identify their career path. Schools commonly

engage in school-based enterprises (SBEs). For example, students may open a business on the school grounds and produce goods or services for purchase, or a local food store chain may sponsor an in-school retail grocery store. Through these experiences, students develop skills in marketing, business management, customer relations, budgeting, inventory, and investments. Profits are used to support the operation of the store for the following year.

The STWOA emphasizes the importance of work-

based learning as an extension of school-based instruction. Work-based learning experiences allow students to apply the academic and occupational knowledge and skills they acquire in their school-based learning opportunities to work and community environments. Effective educational work-based experiences are well-planned, linked closely to school-based learning opportunities, and give meaning to tasks performed on the job. Students are better able to articulate workplace ideas and perform workplace skills within the context where they are used. Through daily observation and practice, students learn to appreciate the nature of the workplace and the challenges faced by workers in specific occupations. Students experience learning through the work process itself. Work-based learning strategies may include job-shadowing experiences, mentoring programs, internships, and apprenticeships. Carefully linking school and work-based learning can benefit students by helping them see an immediate connection between schooling and future educational and occupational choices.

The career pathway approach enables all students to pursue a career-related course of study that integrates academic and occupational content with work-based learning. Focus on a broad occupational theme and contextual learning can motivate students and enrich classroom learning with practical experiences. The use of innovative instruction and integrated teaching methods enable all students to apply skills and knowledge to solve problems typically encountered in the workplace. Within the career pathway organization, students can begin to make informed decisions about their future. These decisions will be grounded in a more realistic understanding of workplace requirements and a greater appreciation for individual abilities, preferences, needs, and interests. In the end, all students will be better prepared for their school to school and school to work transitions.

### Suggested Readings

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programs based on student needs and desires. In addition, an Inclusion Task Force provides training and technical assistance to individuals and districts. A Regional Partnership assists districts in building school to work systems. Parent-Educator Partnership programs help families to relate to educators and to advocate for their children. These programs advance the development of family centers within school buildings. Many more activities and coordinated efforts support the success found in schools within the Grant Wood area. For more information about the activities and programs in Iowa schools, please contact the Iowa School to Work Office or the National School-to-Work Learning Center in Washington, D.C.

Iowa School-to-Work Office  
Mary Peterson, Co-Director  
Laurie Phelan, Co-Director  
150 Des Moines Street  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
(515) 281-9094 • (515) 281-9033 (fax)

The National School-to-Work  
Learning Center  
400 Virginia Avenue, Room 210  
Washington, D.C. 20024  
(800) 251-7236 • (202) 401-6211 (fax)

Additional information about  
Contextual Learning and Career  
Pathways can be found on the School  
to Work Web site by clicking on "State  
Initiatives" from this location:  
[www.stw.ed.gov](http://www.stw.ed.gov) or just click the state  
of Iowa on the map!

The National Transition Alliance extends a special thanks  
to Roberta Ginavan from the Iowa State Department of Education for her assistance  
in facilitating and coordinating our requests for information from Iowa school districts.

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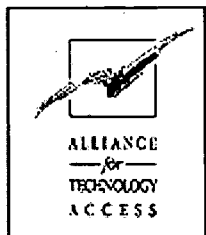
Transition Advisory Committee  
Grant Wood Area  
Education Agency  
4401 Sixth Street SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404  
(319) 399-6700 • (800) 332-8488

## Contextual Learning Project

Promoting Self-Determination  
and Student Involvement in  
Transition Planning  
Michael Wehmeyer,  
Project Director  
Margaret Lawrence,  
Project Coordinator  
Arc National Headquarters  
500 East Border Street,  
Suite 300  
Arlington, TX 76010  
(817) 261-6003;  
fax: (817) 277-3491  
[mwehmeye@metronet.com](mailto:mwehmeye@metronet.com)  
[www.thearc.org/welcome](http://www.thearc.org/welcome)

The Arc, a national organization on mental retardation, is conducting a multistate, multi-district replication of a student-directed transition planning curriculum. This project will provide a product titled "Whose Future is it Anyway?" (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, in press).

## Select Web Sites



The Alliance for Technology Access (ATA) is a network of community-based resource centers dedicated to providing information and support services to children and adults with disabilities, and increasing their use of standard, assistive, and information technologies. Centers can be found all across the country. Headquartered in San Rafael, CA, the Alliance for Technology Access is a national network of technology resource centers and technology vendors including 41 community-based technology centers in 27 states and the Virgin Islands, and 60 technology designers and developers.

[www.ataccess.org](http://www.ataccess.org)

Alliance for Technology Access

2175 East Francisco Boulevard, Suite L • San Rafael, CA 94901 • (415) 455-4575 • [atainfo@ataccess.org](mailto:atainfo@ataccess.org)



The California School-to-Work Interagency Transition Partnership is a statewide effort to coordinate and improve delivery systems that support students with disabilities in moving successfully from school to work and adult life. Eight state and one federal agency, along with a coalition of consumers and parents, have been working together for more than 5 years to improve the service delivery system through state and local partnerships.

This site contains information, resources and products developed over the past 5 years as well as links over 2,000 Internet resources relating to the following topics:

- School-to-Work Transition
- Education
- Resource Links
- Employment & Training
- Legislation
- Products
- Disabilities
- Parents and Consumers

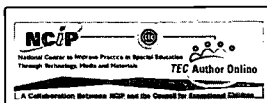
[www.sna.com/switp](http://www.sna.com/switp)

To contact SWITP directly by E-mail choose an address below:

SWITP Web Master ([rick\\_kalman@sccoe.k12.ca.us](mailto:rick_kalman@sccoe.k12.ca.us))

SWITP Office ([switp@sna.com](mailto:switp@sna.com)) or call (916) 443-8693; Fax: (916) 443-3289

717 K Street, Suite 400, Sacramento, CA 95814



The National Center to Improve Practice Education Development Center, Inc.

55 Chapel Street • Newton, Massachusetts 02158-1060

(617) 969-7100 ext. 2387 • (617) 969-4529 (tty) • (617) 969-3440 (fax) • [ncip@edc.org](mailto:ncip@edc.org)

[www.edc.org/FSC/NCIP](http://www.edc.org/FSC/NCIP)

The National Center to Improve Practice (NCIP) promotes the effective use of technology to enhance educational outcomes for students with sensory, cognitive, physical and social/emotional disabilities. Information about school to work transition for students with disabilities can be found on this web site. NCIPnet houses a series of facilitated discussion conferences focusing on technology and special education. NCIPnet enables you to communicate with other members of NCIP net-technology coordinators, staff developers, teachers, specialists, clinicians, administrators, university faculty, parents, advocates, and consumers-who share a common desire to improve the use of technology with students who have disabilities.

# Select Conferences

## April 22-23, 1997

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory  
School-To-Work / Tech Prep Conference  
Spokane Washington Convention Center  
Spokane, WA  
Theresa Lusky: (503) 275-9598 or  
(800) 547-6339, ext. 598  
stwtp@nwrel.org

## April 27-29, 1997

Center on Education and Work  
Second Annual Work Place Learning Conference  
Shaping the Future  
University of Wisconsin, Madison  
1025 West Johnson Street, Room 964  
Madison, WI 53706-1796  
(608) 265-3542 or (800) 446-0399

## May 1-2, 1997

American Vocational Association (AVA)  
Partnerships in School-to-Careers Initiatives  
Indianapolis, IN  
(800) 826-9972

## May 4-6, 1997

Vermont School-to-Work  
Capacity Building Workshop  
Including Youth with Disabilities  
Sponsors: National Transition Alliance, North East  
Regional Resource Center,  
and Vermont State Partners  
The Inn at Essex  
70 Essex Way  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Lucy Ely Pagan: (802) 658-5036

## May 5-8, 1997

The National Association of Workforce  
Development Professionals (NAWDP)  
Annual Conference  
Workforce Futures Embracing Change  
San Antonio, TX  
1620 Eye Street, NW, Suite LL-30  
Washington, DC 20006-4005  
(202) 887-8216

## May 16-17, 1997

Michigan's 1997 Governor's School-to-Work  
Conference  
Lansing, MI  
Kim Pilgrim: (517) 371-1100  
miworks@aol.com

## June 28-July 2, 1997

Fifth National-Academic and  
Vocational Education Conference  
Integrated Learning: The School-  
to-Career Connection  
Beaver Creek, CO  
Debi Plank: (303) 690-9722  
DJPlank@aol.com

## July 30-August 2, 1997

The 1997 National Leadership Forum on  
School-to-Career Transition  
New Orleans, LA  
Hosted by Jobs for the Future  
Fax: (617) 742-5767  
mmartin@jff.org

## October 16-18, 1997

Division on Career Development and Transition  
(DCDT)  
9th International Conference:  
Creating Amazing Transitions  
Division Double Tree Paradise Valley Resort  
Scottsdale, AZ  
Laura Love: (602) 542-2805

## November 3-4 1997

Work Now and in the Future 14  
Preconferences November 2  
Portland Convention Center  
Portland, OR  
Theresa Lusky: (503) 275-9550

## National Transition Alliance National Transition Network 12TH Annual Project Directors Meeting

"Transition Systems Change and  
Model Demonstration Projects:  
A Collaborative  
Vision for Tomorrow"  
June 2-4, 1997  
Renaissance Hotel  
Washington, DC

## NTA is hosting a Marketing School-To-Work For All Youth Seminar

in North Carolina  
Call the National Transition  
Network at  
(612) 626-8649  
for information or  
send e-mail to:  
ntn@mail.ici.coled.umn.edu



## **ALLIANCE**

Alliance is a product of the National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities, (Cooperative Agreement Number H158M50001). The NTA is jointly funded by the United States Departments of Education and Labor, including the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and the National School-to-Work Office.

Produced for the NTA by the  
Academy for Educational Development,  
Richard Horne, NTA Co-Project Director  
Therese Divita, NTA Editor.

## **Contributors**

A special thanks to the following state and agency personnel in Iowa, who patiently reviewed, clarified and enhanced our stories about Career Pathways and Contextual Learning:

Lucy Choisser, Transition Consultant, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, Cedar Rapids, IA  
Shirley Pantini, Linn-Mar Community Schools, Marion, IA  
Donna Swim, Anita Community School District, Anita, IA

Marianne Mooney, M.Ed. Research Assistant, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, VA

Kelli Thuli, Research Associate, AED, National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities, Washington, DC

Bryna Shore Fraser, AED, National School-to-Work Learning Center, Washington, DC

Judy Reichle, California State Co-Coordinator, California School to Work Interagency Transition Partnership (SWITP), CA

Collaborators of the National Transition Alliance are equal opportunity employers and educators.

Alliance welcomes article submissions for future quarterly publications. Deadline for the June issue is May 1, 1997. Please send information, comments, questions or requests to the Editor's attention via e-mail or fax:

Therese Divita  
tdivita@aed.org  
(202) 884-8210 voice  
(202) 884-8443 fax

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**National Transition Alliance  
For Youth With Disabilities**  
Academy for Educational Development  
1875 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Suite 900  
Washington, D.C. 20009-1202

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**Paid**  
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Number 8464

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## Alliance

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## Vocational Assessment

This issue of the Alliance discusses the many facets of assessment in the development of transition plans and services. Often, effective transition plans and services depend upon reliable and useful assessment data. However, as states seek to include youth with disabilities in school to work programs, assessment is a topic of frequent requests for assistance and information.

The first article presents an overview of why assessment is important, and how it connects to school to work. The second article describes the roles of different professionals in a school setting who would likely be responsible for vocational assessment activities. Finally, the last article covers assessment in the broader sense, explaining why incorporating assessment results for all students in school to work efforts is important. This issue also includes a listing of organizations that you may contact to obtain further information and support.

## Vocational Assessment: The Kick-Off Point for Successful Transitions

*Pamela J. Leconte, Ed.D. and Debra A. Neubert, Ph.D.*

Experience has taught us that planning usually falls apart when it is not based on accurate, current and relevant information. This holds true for school to work transition planning as well. Transition plans based upon accurate, current, and relevant assessment information are more likely to be implemented successfully than those which are not based on such data. However, many practitioners are unsure of how to make necessary connections between assessment and planning. As a result, many students have difficulty achieving goals and making a successful transition from school to postsecondary education or work.

Vocational assessment is important for all youth transitioning from school to work, but is particularly important for youth

with disabilities. Almost 37% of students with disabilities drop out of urban secondary schools: a rate nearly twice that of non-disabled students. In 1994, only 16% of students with disabilities completed college. Youth are not faring well in the world of work either. Employers report a general disenchantment with youth who cannot handle the realities of work demands—many have records of quitting or being fired from jobs. As employers and labor experts have told us, the workers of today and tomorrow are woefully unprepared to meet the demands of the workplace.

Vocational assessment offers a solution that can enable youth, especially youth with

**KICK-OFF** *Continued on page 3*



# MEMBERS

## National Transition Alliance Mission

The mission of the National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities is to ensure that youth with disabilities, including those with severe disabilities, acquire skills and knowledge, gain experience, and receive services and supports necessary to achieve successful postschool outcomes, including postsecondary education, gainful employment, independent living, community living, social integration, and lifelong learning. The National Transition Alliance seeks the formation of one education system that benefits from the lessons learned from special education, regular education, and vocational education.

Welcome to the fifth issue of the Alliance newsletter, published by the Academy for Educational Development. We encourage you to copy and share it. In doing so, we ask that you recognize the National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities (NTA) in your publication. As always, we welcome your suggestions for future topics of discussion in Alliance issues. Please contact the Editor at the address listed on the last page of this newsletter or e-mail us at [nta@aed.org](mailto:nta@aed.org).

Complete descriptions of each of our partners can be found on our web site listed below or in our first Alliance issue, Volume 1, Number 1. Included below is an abbreviated version of this list. Please take a moment to visit the NTA web site for current information about our ongoing activities. Additional copies of articles from our first four issues are also found on our web site: just click on Publications from our home page!



### NTA Web Site Address:

[www.dssc.org/nta](http://www.dssc.org/nta)

**Transition Research Institute**  
University of Illinois  
(217) 333-2325 (voice/TTY)  
(217) 244-0851 fax

[www.ed.uiuc.edu/coe/sped/tri/institute.html](http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/coe/sped/tri/institute.html)

**National Transition Network**  
Institute on Community Integration  
University of Minnesota  
(612) 626-7220  
(612) 624-9344 fax

[www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ntn](http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ntn)

**The Academy for Educational Development**  
Washington, DC  
(202) 884-8183  
(202) 884-8443 fax

[www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org)

**The Council of Chief State School Officers**  
Washington, DC  
(202) 408-5505  
(202) 408-8072 fax

[www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org)

**National Association of State Directors of Special Education**  
Alexandria, VA  
(703) 519-3800  
(703) 519-3808 fax

**National Alliance of Business**  
Washington, DC  
(202) 289-2972  
(202) 289-1303 fax

[www.nab.com](http://www.nab.com)

disabilities, to overcome barriers to successful transition to employment and independent living. The goals of vocational assessment are to give youth the opportunity to discover their career, transition, vocational, and educational strengths. Once interest and ability are uncovered, needs and preferences can be identified and goals can be set. Getting an early start on assessment in secondary school is a surefire strategy for making transition planning and career development successful down the road.

### What is Vocational Assessment?

People describe vocational assessment in a variety of ways. However, the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA), the primary association for vocational assessment professionals, defines it as:

"... a comprehensive process conducted over a period of time, usually involving a multidisciplinary team... with the purpose of identifying individual characteristics, education, training, and placement needs, serving as the basis for planning an individual's education (and/or employment) program and which provides the individual with insight into vocational potential."

VEWAA and other professional groups agree that assessment services have three different levels, depending on the interests and needs of the individual. The first level provides services like simple interest screenings that are useful to all individuals. The second level of assessment involves more in-depth analysis of the individual and his or her environments to identify goals and strategies for vocational training, career planning, or employment. The final level is reserved for those who require more intensive, one-on-one, experience-based assistance, called "vocational evaluation". Vocational evaluation uses an interactive, work-based setting to determine an individual's interests and abilities. This level of assessment is often used for individuals who have the most serious barriers to employment.

### Vocational Assessment and School to Work

Two of the most important laws that affect youth with disabilities in school to work systems are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA). Both of these laws identify vocational assessment activities as integral to the successful transition of youth.

IDEA defines transition services as: "a coordinated set of activities for a student... which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation."

The law goes on to state that these activities shall "... be based upon the individual student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation" [1997, P.L. 105-17 602 (30)].

The STWOA echoes the assessment references in IDEA. From its purpose statement, the Act was designed to "... expose students to a broad array of career opportunities and facilitate the selection of career majors, based on individual interests, goals, strengths, and abilities," and to "increase opportunities for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, by enabling individuals to prepare for careers that are not traditional for their race, gender or disability." To achieve these purposes, the STWOA includes a career guidance component to assist students in making informed choices and setting goals that are realistic [108 Stat. 571-2 (1994)].

Thus, policymakers are sending the message that transition planning and career development for any student must be based upon self-discovered interests, abilities, preferences, strengths and goals. To be individually relevant, planning must be based upon personal preferences and goals; to achieve success these goals need to be founded upon present levels of

Vocational evaluation uses an interactive, work-based setting to determine an individual's interests and abilities. This level of assessment is often used for individuals who have the most serious barriers to

knowledge and functioning. All of this can be achieved through vocational assessment.

The STWOA reinforced this method of planning in its three basic components of school to work systems: school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. School-based learning advocates career awareness, exploration and counseling to identify interests, goals, or career majors, including options that may not be traditional for an individual's gender, race, or ethnicity. In addition, school-based learning incorporates regular evaluations to ensure that students receive the training or academic support necessary to achieve their goals.

The work-based learning component encourages activities like work experience, job shadowing, and on-the-job training, which provide a variety of assessment and learning options. These options vary from school to school, but can include mentoring, apprenticeships, cooperative education, and student-based enterprises. Finally, connecting activities bridge school-based learning and work-based learning by matching youth with employment opportunities that correspond to their interests, linking youth to other community services that may be necessary for successful transition, and merging youth development strategies with the skill development and ongoing worker training used by business and industry [108 Stat. 572, 576-8].

The components of successful school to work systems can be directly aligned with the conceptual framework for effective vocational assessment:

- thorough assessment of the individual student's interests, abilities, learning styles, goals, skills, work behaviors;
- specific analysis of the available educational training, vocational training, postsecondary programs, and work environments; and
- "making the match" between the student's personal attributes and the available options for education, training, and career participation.

This emphasis on matching and linking shared by school to work and vocational assessment reinforces the belief that one has to learn those attributes of the

student needs, preferences, strengths, learning styles which most closely correspond with the requirements and aspects of specific work environments. These matches can be made first in school-based learning activities, and eventually via work-based learning experiences and connecting activities. As an individual participates in both assessment and educational processes within the school to work components, his or her self-discovery will become more aligned with actual work requirements.

### **Funding Assessment within School to Work Programs**

Funding is one of the largest issues facing those responsible for implementing the STWOA. Often practitioners are apprehensive about using federal dollars for certain activities, such as assessment. Though policymakers may not have had assessment specifically in mind when they crafted STWOA, they devised some mechanisms for providing funding for such activities.

Rather than further fragment school system efforts to provide quality programs, policymakers attempted to promote more cohesive programming by encouraging the use of funds from different existing laws to supplement effective programming practices. The Act specifies that state school to work systems should integrate local school to work programs, coordinating activities with funds from related federal programs like IDEA, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the Job Training Partnership Act, and others [108 Stat. 584-5].

While some of these laws have been reauthorized and changed, none of them prohibit the goals of the STWOA. In fact, they encourage a more cohesive policy and the cooperative applications of monies to meet the goals of all these laws: to produce employable citizens who contribute to the national economy, improve our nation's competitiveness in the global economy, and promote self-sufficiency.

### **Conclusion**

Discussions with educators at state and local levels frequently uncover assumptions that vocational assessment is an expensive, labor-intensive proposi-

Discussions with educators at state and local levels frequently uncover assumptions that vocational assessment is an expensive, labor-intensive proposition designed just for students who are labeled as special populations.



# Professionals in Vocational Assessment

Adapted and reprinted with permission from the *Transition Resource Guide "Vocational Assessment: A Guide for Parents and Professionals"* (1990). Published by the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

Effective transition programs and services depend on the collaboration of a number of professionals.

Depending on the specific school system, a number of professionals may participate in the assessment process at some level. These can include special education teachers, guidance counselors, vocational educators, vocational evaluators (also called Vocational Assessment Specialists), rehabilitation professionals, vocational support service personnel, school psychologists, social workers; and employers. The roles of some of these professionals are discussed below.

**The Role of the Special Education Teacher.** As happens in other areas of planning for students with disabilities, vocational assessment activities and other forms of career guidance frequently become the responsibility of the special education teacher. Special educators may gather information about the student from observing his or her performance in such areas as academic strengths, employability skills, interpersonal skills, and degree of career awareness. They frequently work closely with other teachers, the student, and the student's family in identifying an individual's needs and areas of interest and, in collaboration with the family, help to develop IEP goals for the student. The insights and recommendations of the special education teacher can be invaluable to the vocational assessment process of a student, particularly when supplemented by formal testing.

**The Role of Guidance Counselors.** Vocational assessment, in some schools, is an integral part of guidance counselors' work with students. This can include interviewing youth about their career goals and vocational plans and perhaps administering one or two paper and pencil or computer-based "tests" to identify interests and/or aptitudes, work values, or temperaments, or by helping youth use state occupational information databases.

Often, guidance counselors serve in a position that enables them to act as case managers for coordinating the collection of assessment information from teachers, parents, and others. There are occasions when professionals may administer assessment activi-

ties, but counselors may interpret the results for the student, parents, and teachers. To interpret results most effectively, counselors must have three bases of concrete information. The counselor should know the student, should have a working knowledge of the assessment instruments and/or processes used, and should have current information about the requirements of in-school and outside vocational education programs.

**The Role of Vocational Educators.** Vocational educators, such as auto repair or data entry teachers, have expertise in vocational training and work requirements. They can assist in the vocational assessment process by providing career information, helping others design realistic assessment activities, and working with vocational evaluators to assess students in the vocational classroom or work site.

**The Role of Vocational Evaluators/Vocational Assessment Specialists.** These professionals are often responsible for conducting vocational assessments of a student. Additionally, they may serve as consultants who provide vocational assessment information to others, or they may coordinate the assessment activities of others. Vocational evaluators are professionals who work within secondary or vocational school settings, community-based programs, in industry, adult rehabilitative services, adult job training services, community colleges or other postsecondary educational settings. Trained, certified vocational evaluators are most qualified to oversee and administer vocational appraisal services and activities, because they have been required to meet national standards of certification (Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialists, 1987).

In summary, collaboration among all educators and outside agency personnel is essential for gathering accurate assessment information that can be used by not only these personnel, but also by trainers, employers, parents, and students.

As happens in other areas of planning for students with disabilities, vocational assessment activities and other forms of career guidance frequently become the responsibility of the special education teacher.

# Annual Project ID

## "Collaborating

**Renaissance  
Washington, DC Hotel**

**June 2-4, 1997**



Barbara Guy (c) of the National Transition Network and Selete Avoke (r) of the Iowa Department of Education confer with a participant.

Richard Horne of the National Transition Alliance makes a point with the help of Kelly Corbey.



The Federal Panel (l-r): Tom Hehir, OSERS, U.S. Department of Education; JD Hoyer, National School-to-Work Initiative; Howard Moses, OSERS, U.S. Department of Education.

Transcripts of the meeting  
are available on the  
NTA web site:

[www.dssc.org/nta](http://www.dssc.org/nta)



A staff member from the STEP Project of Louisville, Kentucky explains his project.



Christina K.  
University

# Directors Meeting for the Future"

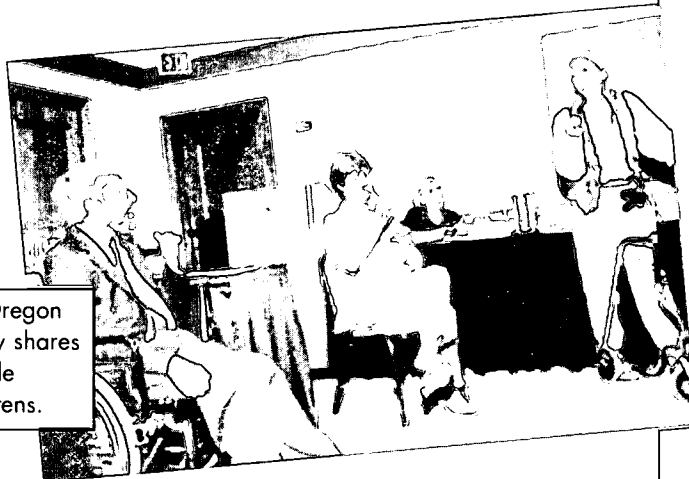


Jocelyn Harney and Edna Johnson of the University of Illinois discuss the finer points of collaboration.

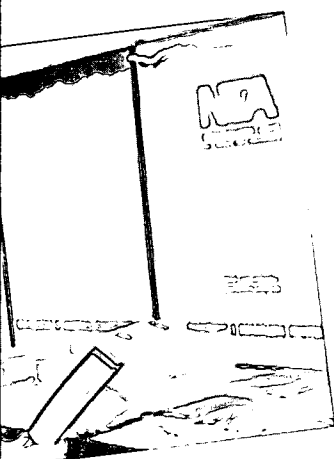
This year, the National Transition Alliance and National Transition Network combined their annual Project Directors Meetings. The joint meeting explored how Systems Change and Model Demonstration projects can collaborate in a time when education and transition services are changing.



U.S. Department of Work Office; and  
Department of Education.



Laurie Powers (r) of the Oregon Health Sciences University shares her research findings while OSEP's Michael Ward listens.



Staff member of California State checks out the NTA display.



A staff member of the Hawaii Interagency Transition Project at the NTA Reception and Poster Session.

# Selected Organizations

## **ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education (ERIC ACVE)**

Ohio State University  
1900 Kenny Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1090  
(800) 848-4815 or (614) 292-4353  
(614) 292-1260 fax  
<http://coe.ohio-state.edu/cete/ericacve/index.htm>

## **ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education (ERIC EC)**

Council for Exceptional Children  
1920 Association Drive  
Reston, VA 22091-1589  
(800) 328-0272 or (703) 487-9432  
(703) 264-9449 TTY (703) 264-9494 fax  
<http://www.cec.sped.org/er-menu.htm>

## **American Vocational Association (AVA)**

1410 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
(800) 826-9972  
(703) 683-3111 (local)  
<http://www.avaonline.org>

## **Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Supported Employment (RRTC)**

1314 West Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23284-2011  
<http://www.vcu.edu/rrtcweb/>

## **Division of Career Development and Transition (DCDT)**

Council for Exceptional Children  
1920 Association Drive  
Reston, VA 22091-1589  
(703) 620-3660  
<http://www.kumc.edu/dcdt>

## **Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialists (CCWAVES)**

808 17th Street NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20006-3910  
(202) 466-7444  
(202) 223-9569  
76101.3626@compuserve.com  
<http://impactonline.org/vewaa/ccwaves.html>

**KICK OFF** *Continued from page 4*

tion designed just for students who are labeled as special populations—those with disabilities, those we place “at risk,” adjudicated youth, those from other linguistic or cultural backgrounds. These are misconceptions. Vocational assessment is a time-saving intervention that prevents students from making poor career choices, helps them find satisfying, choice-based educational and vocational programming, and correlates their abilities with their interests and preferences. It is an investment for the future.

## **References**

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# Legislative Update:

## Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

*Adapted and reprinted with permission from the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 were recently passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives and signed into law by President Clinton. These amendments have modified the requirements for providing transition services to youth with disabilities.

While the definition of transition services remains the same, two notable changes have been made to transition-related IEP requirements:

- beginning when a student is 14, and annually thereafter, the student's IEP must contain a statement of his or her transition service needs under the various components of the IEP that focus upon the student's courses of study (e.g., vocational education or advanced placement); and
- beginning at least one year before the student reaches the age of majority under State law, the IEP must contain a statement that the student has been informed of the rights under the law that will transfer to him or her upon reaching the age of majority.

The new IDEA maintains 16 as the age when students' IEPs must contain statements of needed transition services. These two requirements—one for students aged 14 and older and one for students aged 16 and older—seem confusingly similar. However, according to the Committee on Labor and Human Resources' Report to Accompany S. 717 (the report that accompanied the proposed IDEA to Congress to explain the intent behind the proposed changes), the purpose of including certain statements for students beginning at age 14, "is to focus attention on how the child's educational program can be planned to help the child

make a successful transition to his or her goals for life after secondary school. This provision is designed to augment, and not replace, the separate transition services requirement, under which children with disabilities beginning no later than age 16 receive transition services..." (p. 18).

### The Language of the Law

"Individualized Education Program.—The term 'individualized education program' or 'IEP' means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with this section and that includes—

(i)...

(vii)(I) beginning at age 14, and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the child under the applicable components of the child's IEP that focuses on the child's courses of study (such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program);

(II) beginning at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP Team), a statement of needed transition services for the child, including, when appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages; and

(III) beginning at least one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of his or her rights under this title, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under section 615(m)...

In regard to the "age of majority" changes, the Committee's report goes on to say that, "Current law is not clear on what is required when a child with a disability attains the age of majority. In order to clarify the situation, the IEP definition...includes a statement that the child has been informed of his or her rights under part B, if any, that will transfer to the child when he or she attains the age of majority. The bill clarifies that when a child is considered incapable of making educational decisions, the State will develop procedures for appointing the parents or another individual to represent the interests of the child" (p. 19).



# When All Means All: How to Include Youth with Disabilities in Accountability Systems

Adapted and reprinted with permission from *School-to-Work Perspectives* "When All Means All: How to Include Youth with Disabilities in Accountability Systems" (1997). Published for the National Transition Alliance by the National Transition Network.

Basic skills, thinking skills, personal qualities, job skills, higher standards—these are the words of school-to-work efforts across the nation. States are forging ahead to develop systems where students, regardless of whether they are college bound or heading directly toward employment, are attaining work-related skills before they exit high school. Challenging and relevant academics, as well as meaningful work-based learning experiences in communities, are the glue of school-to-work efforts. Incumbent on schools and school-to-work efforts is the definition of a system of standards toward which students are to progress, and an accountability system for ensuring that progress is being made toward those standards.

One of the shining aspects of school-to-work efforts is that they are for all students. The effort is not targeted toward one group of students, but is specifically designed to include all students, including students with disabilities. Like other recent legislation (Goals 2000, Improving America's Schools Act), the School-to-Work Opportunities Act specifically notes that students with disabilities (and other traditionally isolated segments of the student population) must be included. This, in turn, means that students with disabilities must be included in the standards and the accountability system that are integral to school-to-work efforts.

But the question remains: How? The unique learning styles and diverse needs of students with disabilities pose challenges for school-to-work efforts. Consideration must be given to how standards, either academic or vocational, can be made applicable to students with special educational needs. Likewise, assessment designed to measure student progress toward these standards must take into account a wide diversity of student abilities. We offer strategies that will help you to view standards from the perspective of all students, build an aligned assessment system that includes all students, create or revise policies on student participation in assessment, provide testing

accommodations for students needing them, and report the results to public or legislative audiences.

## Strategies

### Keep Standards Broad

Academic content or skills standards should be composed to encompass diverse student abilities and performance. For example, a standard such as "uses work time efficiently" can be readily applied to virtually all students, including those with very severe disabilities. On the other hand, setting an expectation that all students will "work at a pace equal to or greater than industry standards" may automatically exclude many students from ever reaching the standard. Standards will better serve your efforts when they can be adapted to allow for individualized goals to be established for students of differing abilities.

### Think Big When Designing Assessments

Students with disabilities are commonly excluded from assessment programs. Many parents and teachers believe that such students have been tested enough through eligibility evaluations and periodic reviews. Others fear the results from these students will "drag down" their school or district performance scores. And many times, testing officials hesitate to adapt the test or testing conditions, in fear of altering the standard conditions under which the test is to be given. Consider students with disabilities in the early stages of test development. Make sure the items or tasks you are constructing include those in which students with disabilities could readily participate, and that you test on populations that include students with disabilities.

### Make Sure Policies Get the Point Across

Policies governing which students participate in assessment programs vary greatly among states and

The use of accommodations is not intended to give unfair advantage to any student, but instead is meant to "level the playing field" for those students whose disabilities may interfere with their ability to demonstrate their true knowledge or skill level.

WHEN ALL MEANS ALL, continued on page 10

school districts. For students with disabilities, these decisions commonly become the responsibility of the parents and professionals who make up the team overseeing the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These teams base their decisions on guidelines spelled out in school district or state policies.

Review your current assessment policies to make sure that students with disabilities are not being excluded from assessment opportunities solely on the basis of their disability category or their educational setting. If participation is based on exposure to the curriculum or training covered by the test, encourage IEP teams to consider why the student hasn't been afforded the learning opportunities of other students, and how, if the student is in a different curriculum, will our school or school district remain accountable for his or her progress?

### **Use Accommodations to Level the Playing Field**

Measuring the progress of some of your students will be enhanced through the use of testing accommodations—those additional strategies or technologies that are provided to students to compensate for the effect of their disabilities in assessment situations.

Accommodations can be categorized as belonging to one of four types: (1) presentation (e.g., tape recorded test directions); (2) response (e.g., marking answers directly in test booklet); (3) timing or scheduling (e.g., administering the test over several sessions rather than one lengthy session); or (4) setting

(e.g., administering the test to a small group or an individual). Their use is not intended to give unfair advantage to any student, but instead is meant to "level the playing field" for those students whose disabilities may interfere with their ability to demonstrate their true knowledge or skill level. Typically, accommodations chosen for a student should be those already provided in his or her instructional setting.

### **Take Roll Call Before Reporting Results**

How will you know if your school-to-work efforts are working? The answer depends on your ability to collect valid and reliable information on all students' knowledge and skill development.

Approaches to analyzing and reporting assessment results often exclude many students with disabilities. Students with disabilities may be exempted from the testing situation altogether. In other cases, students with disabilities are permitted to participate, but their scores are not aggregated with those of students in general education. When interpreting or reporting the results of any assessment used in your school-to-work efforts, inquire as to how many students were excluded from participation, and the reasons for these exemptions. Be sure that any report comparing programs, schools, or districts includes information on the numbers of students not included. Ask for performance data to be disaggregated as well, to compare and understand differences between the progress of students with disabilities and their peers without disabilities.

### **National Center for Research in Vocational Education**



<http://vocserve.berkeley.edu/>

NCRVE is the nation's largest center for research and development in work-related education. Its mission is to strengthen education to prepare all individuals for lasting and rewarding employment, and lifelong learning. NCRVE also hosts VOCNET—an electronic discussion list for everyone interested in vocational education issues.

### **WEB RESOURCES**

### **Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA)**

The Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association (VEWAA) is a non-profit professional association whose members work with people to match them with training, careers, and employment. Members provide services to individuals with disabilities and non-disabled people who need assistance with vocational development and/or career decision-making.



**24** <http://impactonline.org/vewaa/>

# Selected Conferences

## Division of Career Development and Transition (DCDT)

*9th International Conference: "Creating Amazing Transitions"*

October 16-18, 1997

Division Double Tree Paradise Valley Resort  
Scottsdale, Arizona

*For more information, contact Ann Marie Cook at (703) 691-7826 or at [ACookVTVSN@aol.com](mailto:ACookVTVSN@aol.com).*

### **Watch for the NTA Strand at DCDT!**

A Policy and Practice Forum on  
School-to-Work Opportunities  
for Youth With Disabilities:  
A Collaborative Vision  
for the Future

## Through the Looking Glass

*International Conference on Parents with Disabilities  
and Their Families*

October 23-26, 1997

San Francisco Bay Area, California

*Call (800) 644-2666 x123 (U.S.) or (510) 848-1112 x123 (Int'l) or contact TLG via e-mail at [TLGInfo@lookingglass.org](mailto:TLGInfo@lookingglass.org).*

## Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

*"Work Now and in the Future 14" Conference*

November 3-4, 1997

(Preconferences November 2)

Portland Convention Center

Portland, Oregon

*For more information, contact Theresa Lusty at (503) 275-9550.*

## Safe Schools Coalition, Inc.

*Third Joint National Conference  
on Transition from School to Careers*

November 20-22, 1997

Holiday Inn International Drive Resort  
Orlando, Florida

*Call (800) 537-4903 for more information. Early  
ation is recommended!*

## TASH (The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps)

*1997 Annual Convention: "We the People,  
ALL the People"*

December 10-13, 1997

Sheraton Boston

Boston, Massachusetts

*Call (800) 482-TASH for more information.*

## American Vocational Association (AVA)

*Annual Trade Show*

December 11-13, 1997

Las Vegas Convention Center

Las Vegas, Nevada

*Call (800) 826-9972 for more  
information.*

## Center on Education and Work (CEW)

*National Careers Conference 1998*

*"Careers: From Education to  
Application"*

February 2-4, 1998

Madison, Wisconsin

*Call (800) 446-0399 or  
contact CEW via e-mail at  
[cewmail@soemadison.wisc.edu](mailto:cewmail@soemadison.wisc.edu).  
Early registration deadline is  
December 15, 1997!*

## Mediation Training and Information Center for the ADA

Regional training seminars on  
mediating ADA disputes in  
employment, campus ADA/504  
disputes, mediating special educa-  
tion disputes and more. One day  
and multi-day trainings.

*For more information, call (800) 346-7643 or visit  
the web site: <http://igc.apc.org/medADA/>*

## U.S. Department of Education

1997 Regional  
Conferences on Improving  
America's Schools

"A Call to Action: Working  
Together for Equity and  
Excellence"

San Diego, California  
October 16-18, 1997

Dallas, Texas  
November 16-18, 1997

Washington, DC  
December 14-16, 1997

**(800) 203-5494**

**Register now!**

## **ALLIANCE**

The Alliance is a product of the National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities (NTA), Cooperative Agreement Number H158M50001. The NTA is jointly funded by the United States Departments of Education and Labor, including the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and the National School-to-Work Office.

Produced for the NTA by the Academy for Educational Development.  
Richard L. Horne, Co-Project Director  
Jean Kohanek, Editor

## **Contributors**

### **Special thanks to the following contributors:**

Pamela J. Leconte, Ed.D., George Washington University

Debra A. Neubert, Ph.D., University of Maryland

Lisa Küpper, Editor

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities

Ron Erikson and Martha Thurlow, National Center for Educational Outcomes  
University of Minnesota

Teri Wallace, National Transition Alliance  
University of Minnesota

Laurie Black, Laurie Black Photo

Collaborators of the National Transition Alliance are equal opportunity employers and educators.

The Alliance welcomes article submissions for future quarterly publications. Deadline for the December issue is November 1, 1997. Please send information, comments, questions or requests to:

Jean Kohanek, Editor (202) 884-8182  
National Transition Alliance (202) 884-8443 fax  
1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, #900 nta@aed.org  
Washington, DC 20009-1202

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### **National Transition Alliance For Youth With Disabilities**

Academy for Educational Development  
1875 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20009-1202

Non-Profit Organization  
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**Paid**  
Washington, DC  
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